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Finland to Place NATO Base Near Russian Border

By AFP

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Finland will place a key NATO base less than 200 kilometers (125 miles) from its eastern border with Russia, a move that Helsinki says will "send a message" to Moscow, the Finnish Defense Ministry said Friday.

Finland, which shares a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) border with Russia, became a NATO member last year, dropping decades of military non-alignment after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said NATO's new headquarters for the Northern European land command unit will be in the city of Mikkeli, located in southeastern Finland.

"Finland is sending a message to Russia that we are a full member of NATO, and that NATO has a very strong role also in Finland's defense," Hakkanen said at a press conference.

The Finnish defense forces' army command is already located at the site of the future base.

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"By combining the locations, we achieve the best possible synergy between national defense management and NATO defense management," Hakkanen said.

The military alliance's Multi Corps Land Component Command will operate under NATO's Norfolk command in the United States, which oversees the Atlantic and Arctic regions.

Hakkanen said the headquarters would be staffed by a few dozen people from different NATO countries.

In June, NATO defense ministers gave the green light for Finland to host the Multi Corps Land Component Command as well as the Forward Land Forces.

Details about the FLF — NATO's rotating, multinational ground forces based in several countries on NATO's eastern front — will be announced at a later stage, Hakkanen said.

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